

rights and values. And I believe that we, as a people, will never give those up."

Kahli's parents, Dave and Tammy, must swell with pride to have such a talented daughter exhibit her deep and sincere love of her country in a public forum. While it is certainly heartwarming to see that displays of patriotism have become more common since September 11, we should all join Kahli in hoping that "this feeling of patriotism that has been reborn in this country will last and stay in our hearts forever."

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I am proud that young people such as Kahli Ries and her family reside in the Fifth Congressional District of Michigan. The recognition that Kahli has received from the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 10884 and its Ladies Auxiliary of Mayville and from the Department of Michigan Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is indeed a fine honor for this outstanding young woman. I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating Kahli Ries and in wishing her continued success in spreading her patriotic message to our fellow citizens.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES REGARDING BENEFITS OF MENTORING

HON. NITA M. LOWEY

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, January 23, 2002

Mrs. LOWEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of this resolution calling for the establishment of National Mentoring Month.

I am honored to serve as a member of the Board of Directors of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, the oldest and largest mentoring organization in the United States. Big Brothers Big Sisters will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2004. During the past century, Big Brothers Big Sisters has provided the foundation for the mentoring movement. Today, Big Brothers Big Sisters reaches over 210,000 children in over 500 locations in the United States, with the goal of reaching one million children by 2010.

Mentoring is dependent on highly committed volunteers. Volunteers in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program and in other high-quality mentoring programs across the United States devote many hours each week and become role models for children. As the resolution points out, research has proven the tremendous contribution that these volunteers make in the overall positive development of the children with whom they are matched.

Mentoring changes lives, but it is not an easy service to provide. I think it is so important that Congress acknowledge the tremendous contribution being made by today's volunteer mentors, and challenge everyone to make a difference in the lives of America's children.

GIRL SCOUTS GOLD MEDAL RECIPIENT: RACHEL SINK

HON. STEVE ISRAEL

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 29, 2002

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, it is with great pride that I rise today to recognize one of New York's outstanding young students: Rachel Sink. In February, the young women of her troop will honor her by bestowing upon her the Girl Scouts Gold Medal.

Since the beginning of this century, the Girls Scouts of America have provided thousands of

youngsters each year the opportunity to make friends, explore new ideas, and develop leadership skills while learning self-reliance and teamwork.

These awards are presented only to those who possess the qualities that make our nation great: commitment to excellence, hard work, and genuine love of community service. The Gold Awards represent the highest awards attainable by junior and high school Girl Scouts.

I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating the recipient of this award, as her activities are indeed worthy of praise. Their leadership benefits our community and they serve as role models for their peers.

Also, we must not forget the unsung heroes, who continue to devote a large part of their lives to make all this possible. Therefore, I salute the families, scout leaders, and countless others who have given generously of their time and energy in support of scouting.

It is with great pride that I recognize the achievements of Rachel, and bring the attention of Congress to this successful young woman on her day of recognition.

RECOGNIZING STUDENTS AT THE ANTIOCH UPPER GRADE SCHOOL IN ILLINOIS' 8TH DISTRICT

HON. PHILIP M. CRANE

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 29, 2002

Mr. CRANE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize students at the Antioch Upper Grade School in Illinois' 8th District. Today, as our brave men and women in uniform are deployed throughout the world to protect and defend the freedoms we all hold so dear, we are more aware than ever before of the cost of the freedom.

The students at Antioch Upper Grade School have also been reflecting on the cost of freedom. Samantha Wise, the 8th grade social studies teacher at Antioch Upper Grade School, had each of her students write an essay entitled "Is Freedom Really Free?" Ms. Wise submitted the essays in the local VFW essay contest, and three students won. Joe Barlow won first prize representing the Village of Antioch, and third place in the 5th District for the VFW. Justin Kaminsky and Anthony Baschetti, were also runners-up for the Village of Antioch.

All of the students and their teacher should be commended for their work. It makes me proud to see schools like the Antioch Upper Grade School showing their patriotism.

THE VETERANS HEALTH CARE ITEMS PROCUREMENT REFORM AND IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2002

HON. LANE EVANS

OF ILLINOIS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, January 29, 2002

Mr. EVANS. Mr. Speaker, the procurement of medical and surgical items is a major expenditure for the Department of Veterans Affairs. During fiscal year 2001, for example, VA reported spending more than \$1.3 billion for medical and surgical supplies and equipment. The procurement of medical and surgical supplies and equipment by VA is also an activity in need of significant reform and improvement. To achieve these reforms, I am today introducing "Veterans Health Care Items Procurement Reform Improvement Act of 2002." I

urge my colleagues to support and promptly enact this important legislation.

A major provision of the "Veterans Health Care Items Procurement Reform and Improvement Act of 2002" directs the Department of Veterans Affairs, when procuring medical/surgical supplies and equipment, to buy these items from the Federal Supply Schedule (FSS) or from national contracts negotiated by VA. By requiring most VA health medical/surgical supplies and equipment to be purchased from the FSS or national contracts, VA can better leverage the tremendous purchasing power of its annual budget in excess of \$1 billion for medical/surgical supplies and equipment. When enacted, this legislation is expected to reduce VA procurement costs by tens of millions of dollars annually.

This legislation also provides for certain limited exceptions to the centralized procurement requirement. For example, it allows emergency purchases of medical/surgical supplies and equipment from other than FSS or national contracts and permits purchases of needed items not listed on the FSS. Other limited exceptions should facilitate greater financial savings from—and greater use of—important initiatives such as VA/DOD sharing and small business procurement.

In a May 15, 2001 assessment entitled, "Evaluation of the Department of Veterans Affairs Purchasing Practices", the VA Office of Inspector General (OIG) reported, "The Department of Veterans Affairs is not leveraging its buying power to obtain the best prices for items purchased." Among the recommendations of the OIG were, "VA facilities be required to purchase items that are on national contracts, such as FSS, and that the FSS and other national contracts be mandatory sources of medical/surgical supplies and equipment" and local procurement contracts be specifically prohibited with very limited exceptions.

This measure will provide strong encouragement to vendors who wish to do business with VA to list their health-care items on part 65 and 66 of the Federal Supply Classification as appropriate or as part of a National contract. This legislation will eliminate existing inefficiencies from the current acquisition system that allows for multiple, locally-negotiated contracts with national vendors and distributors. Despite the enormous volume of health care items procured by VA, these local contracts often do not provide VA purchasers with the best price offered by vendors to other buyers.

In addition, this bill strengthens the contractual management and oversight tools of the Department of Veterans Affairs. It makes pre- and post-award contract audit clauses mandatory for almost all types of procurement contracts for health-care items. This will enable procurement officers, supervisors, the VA Office of the Inspector General, and the GAO to review the true value and cost of an item and assure compliance with contract provisions. In fiscal year 1997 when audit clauses were more common, audits accounted for the recovery of over \$35 million dollars—last year with audit clauses less common the total recovery was less than \$12 million dollars.

Other important provisions of this legislation will require most VA procurement contracts to include a price reduction clause. With the inclusion of a price reduction clause, when a vendor offers a health-care item at a lower price to another buyer in a commercial contract, VA will benefit from the purchase price reduction and receive the new lower purchase price for a health-care item it has previously agreed to purchase from the vendor.